

Alternatives to Ornamental Invasive Plants: A sustainable solution for New York State

Background:

Invasive species are among the top causes of biodiversity loss across the globe. New York is one of many states throughout the U.S. now taking steps toward improving our environment by slowing the spread of invasive plants. Horticulturalists and gardeners can be part of the solution by growing and planting alternatives to ornamental invasive plants.

Invasive plants and animals pose a serious threat to some local economies in NY. For one, maintaining the value and beauty of woodlands, parks, and farms requires expensive control measures. For another, invasives that diminish the natural beauty of the outdoors also diminish the value of tourism.

New regulations went effect in March of 2015 that prohibit or regulate 69 species of plants in NY. Some of these plants are common in the trade. Their absence will create a void for the landscape industry could have a negative impact on New York's nursery industry.

Procedures:

In order to provide growers, retailers and consumers options, other than banned invasive plants, Brian Eshenaur spearheaded the effort along with Cornell's invasive species group to compile a list of alternative plants. The completed draft was sent to reviewers on Cornell's campus as well as within Cooperative Extension. In addition it was sent for review to representatives from in the New York natural environment community. The input from reviewers was incorporated into the publication.

Results and Discussion:

In the new resources, available both online and in printed form, individuals can find plants similar both in appearance and in cultural requirements to the invasive plants they can replace. These plants may be native or not but are not considered invasive. The alternatives listed are just a few of many possibilities. They are hardy in much of New York, but check both your hardiness zone and your site's conditions. Many of these alternatives are readily available at local nurseries.

Online Resource: Beginning in March of 2015 we opened access to the publication on the NYS Integrated Pest Management Program Website.

http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/nursery_ghouse/invasive_plants.asp

This is the living document, which is being updated as new alternatives come to light and as exempt, sterile cultivars of banned species are released. In the months since it was released there have been over 1,000 page views with an average time on the page of over 4 minutes.

Printed Resource: The printed color publication was released in June of 2015 with 6,000 copies. Each CCE County Association office in New York state received a supply of 80, each PRISM received 75. DEC and Ag & Markets each received 150. The CCE IPM office also received a supply. Other copies have been distributed to the public after it is announcement on NYIS.INFO and Twitter. A limited supply remains and those copies are being distributed upon request.

Brian Eshenaur created an accompanying presentation with Powerpoint slides. He presented this at 4 venues in 2015 and has made the Powerpoint available to extension educators. At this point it has already been downloaded five times.

We plan to continue to promote and update the online publication and make additional presentations upon request in 2016.